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Political Opportunity Structure, Contentious Social Movements, and State-Based Organizations: The Fight against Solidarity inside the Polish United Workers Party

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Studies of social movements have often focused on the role of the state vis-à-vis social movements—in recent times using the concept of political opportunity structure to understand the options available to social movements. This article examines the internal conflicts within the ruling party in Communist Poland to show that a reciprocal process proceeded, in which both the social movement and the state found the choices of action available to them limited by the other, rather than just the social movement. The social upheaval that impacted the entire country brought about the rise of a reform movement within the ruling Polish United Workers Party, which prevented the government from acting as it preferred for a significant period of time. That reform movement, which would not have existed without Solidarity and certainly would not have brought about intraparty changes by itself, saw itself as connected to and dependent upon Solidarity. Party conservatives had to respond to and overcome the reformers before they could turn their full attention to ending the challenge Solidarity presented to the Communist system. In effect, for a time, Solidarity limited the political opportunity structure of the state, while the reverse was also true. While social movement scholars have long considered the possibilities and the limits on possibilities available to social movements because of the state or other external circumstances, this experience demonstrates that similar considerations must sometimes be contemplated with respect to the state.

The concept of political opportunity structure has been a leading theoretical tool of social movement scholars for the last few decades. It has been widely used by many analysts in considering movements in this country and abroad (e.g., Amenta and Zylan 1991; Amenta et al. 1994; Banaszak 1996; Joppke 1993; Tarrow 1994; Van Dyke and Soule 2002), including those that are not democracies (Osa and Corduneau-Huci 2003). Nonetheless, the theory has been critiqued in various ways: for example, as being overused and therefore "in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up every aspect of the social movement environment" (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 275); or that it purports to explain too much (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). It has been called muddled, for example, that the notion of "structure," which is presumably long lasting, conflicts with the notion that opportunities are fleeting and that the chances to take advantage of them are often short-lived. As James M. Jasper put it, "Windows of opportunity open

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and close, often suddenly and unexpectedly; a rapid response is usually necessary to take advantage of them" (Jasper 2012a: 12, 25–26). Some have suggested abandoning the notion of "structure" and focusing instead simply on "opportunities" (Broe and Duyvendak 2012: 240).

Despite this lack of clarity, what is crucial about the concept is, as David S. Meyer put it (2004: 126), that "activists' prospects for advancing particular claims, mobilizing supporters, and affecting influence are context-dependent." To emphasize the importance of the situation within which the social movement evolves, Meyer (ibid., 125) paraphrased Marx: "Social protest movements make history … but not in circumstances they choose." So, social movements are forced to deal with what Meyer and Debra Minkoff (2004) refer to as "exogenous factors" that are outside of their control. For example, one of the key concerns that political opportunity structure theory points to is how the state acts toward a social movement, or more generally toward those who challenge the social order—that is, whether it represses, co-opts, or accommodates the demands that such a movement advances. State action, then, is seen as one of the important *independent* variables affecting the movement's chances to succeed.

But is state action always an independent variable, or can the movement affect the actions the state takes by limiting the choices of action available to it in the same way that the state is seen to affect the movement's alternatives? We know that when social movements arise that challenge the state, each contending side influences and constrains the other. A kind of interactive dance (or what Charles Tilly [1999] called "interactive performance" and what Mayer N. Zald and Bert Useem [1987] called a "sometimes loosely coupled tango") proceeds, in which each collective actor responds to the moves of the other. As a result of each move, some options may be closed off and others opened for the other side (Berger and Luckman 1966; McAdam et al. 1988; Zald and Useem 1987). The dynamics of social movements cannot be understood without recognizing this interaction, and the ways it affects *both* sides. The actions, manner, frames, and ideologies of the state, and those of social movements that are making demands on the state, as well as the process of contention, have their effect *not only on the larger society, but also within each of the contending sides*. Their culture, policies, cohesiveness, and morale are subject to these influences, which can have a significant impact on the outcome in the society as a whole.

These collective actors—both the social movements and the state they confront—encompass large numbers of people who have different structural positions, and therefore different interests and possibly different ideologies. They will often be affected by, and respond to, new circumstances in different and sometimes conflicted ways. Thus, disagreements develop or those that already exist are sharpened; the efforts of states, social movement organizations, or movement activists may be stymied, stalled, or pushed forward because of the internal turmoil, or they may proceed because of its absence.

So, whether it is called "political opportunity structure" or something else, what is crucial is that the collective actor must respond to conditions it does not control; each player affects the other. To take one example: differences among elites are said

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to be important in enabling the movement to achieve its goals. When elites are not divided, it is considerably more difficult to challenge them than when elements of the elite are potentially available to support the social movement. Doug McAdam (1996: 27) contended that "the presence or absence of elite allies" is one of the important criteria in shaping the political opportunity structure in a given situation. But are those differences among the elites really independent of what the social movement does? Or can the social movement help to create them? In a study of the civil rights movement, I found that while the southern elite was structurally split between the old landowning ruling class, whose origins lay in the nineteenth century, and the new business class, they both shared the same racist outlook—but the business class was more vulnerable to outside pressures. The activity of the civil rights movement forced that *structural* split, which created the potential for policy differences into a *political* difference that mattered and that the movement was able to take advantage of (Bloom 1987).

A full explanation of these interrelated influences would require an analysis of both sides, considering the possible alternative lines of action available to them, and the actual choices they made. But, while previous research has examined the constraints and opportunities of challengers, little work has been done on the parallel issues for state actors. While many analysts have called for "bringing the state back in" in the study of revolutions (Evans et al. 1985; Goldstone 1991; Skocpol 1979), few have directly examined state actors and ruling parties in the process of contention. This study begins to fill this lacuna showing, in particular, that the state can be impacted directly by the strategies of protest movements. Both state actors and protestors are moving, and interrelated, targets of each other.

I show this tendency by examining the conflict that took place within Poland's Polish United Workers Party during the period of open political conflict between the Solidarity union and the ruling party, together with the state it controlled. That period began at the end of August 1980, following strikes first in the nation's shipyards, and soon in much of the rest of Polish industry. At that time, agreement was reached in negotiations between workers in three regions of the country and representatives of the Communist government, which allowed workers to establish an independent trade union, with the right to strike—something previously not contemplated within the Soviet empire. The name it took—Solidarity—expressed both its source of strength and its ideology: workers would stand with and protect one another. The period ended on the night of December 12–13, 1981, when martial law was declared, some 10,000 Solidarity leaders and activists all over the country were detained, and the union was declared "suspended" and later made illegal.

This article examines what took place inside Poland's Communist Party and the state it controlled during this period of legal Solidarity. It shows that for a considerable period of time, the state was constrained in the kind of actions it was able to take; political leaders were unable for a lengthy period to carry out the actions they wished because of the strength and influence of the social movement by which they were challenged. This example suggests that social movement analysis should consider this possibility when the state is confronted by a significant social movement: the movement may be able to limit the choices of action available to the state.

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Solidarity never limited itself to simple trade union demands; it challenged the whole party/state apparatus on a wide range of issues. One of the most threatening of these issues was that Solidarity activists held that the existing criteria for advancement in the society—party membership and loyalty—were illegitimate. They insisted that competence alone should be necessary. This view occasioned a huge fight with the nation's leaders and with the many people whose careers had advanced according to these principles. Unsurprisingly, both resisted this demand.

Generally, in treatments of social movements going back to Marx, it has been recognized that the state is not always a unitary actor, especially when confronted with powerful social movements; rather, it is often an arena of conflict, in which various actors contend for policies that will favor them (Tarrow 1994). Nonetheless, the fluidity of state policy is often not appreciated; analysts consider whether the state is more or less repressive, and what opportunities for a social movement particular state action or inaction makes available (Della Porta 1996; Marx 1974). But, there can be conflict within the ruling bodies over how to respond to a social movement.[1] I am certainly not the only one in recent times to pay attention to how the internal dynamics of the state can affect state actions. As James M. Jasper noted: "No state is fully unified, such that some factions and individuals are constantly scanning events for chances to defect or resist if they think it is to their advantage" (Jasper 2012b: 222)—or, I might add, because they disagree with state policy. That was certainly the case within the ruling Polish United Workers Party.

Policies adopted by the state can vary, depending on the strength of different factions within it. Disagreements about these policies can be particularly rancorous if the social movement's goals threaten the status and power of the ruling group or party. If Solidarity's demands for change were implemented, some elements of the ruling group would have very different outcomes than others, which means they might well respond differently to them.[2] By 1980, most people who belonged to the party did so primarily for the benefits their position brought them, so a challenge to the party was personal for many of them.

At first glance, the inability of a Soviet-style state simply to crack down when faced with such a challenge might appear surprising; in Poland's recent past, blood had been shed in similar circumstances (Bloom 2002). A decade earlier, in 1970, when the same shipyards went on strike, the government called upon the military and the police to use deadly force. There were disputes about how many were killed—the government claimed the number was in the tens, while workers insisted it could be in the hundreds. I have the records of one emergency room in one hospital in Szczecin where hundreds of people were injured, and there are claims that thousands were injured, overall. Although those 1970 strikes were defeated, the government fell,

1. Differences also arise within social movement organizations. I will provide an example of such a difference within Solidarity later in the article.

2. There have been very few efforts to examine intrastate conflicts when confronted with a social movement. Some studies do consider the role of the state, but usually they are talking about relatively democratic states, such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, where one or more political parties can be drawn into supporting a social movement. E.g., Flam 1994; Zald and Useem 1987.

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and the new leader, Edward Gierek, promised that he would never use deadly force against the workers, and he did not (Bloom 2002). But, for most people, the Soviet-imposed regime was seen simply as an agent of Moscow—and that was a damning indictment.

Solidarity's birth affected the entire atmosphere in the country, including inside the Polish United Workers Party, where there were serious conflicts about how to respond to the challenges Solidarity posed. For all these reasons, not only Solidarity but also the state faced significant constraints on its ability to act (McAdam et al. 1996). The party/state apparatus made several attempts to change the balance of power, but for several months these efforts failed and Solidarity grew more powerful, and more threatening to that apparatus.

What happened inside the party during this period? How was its internal life affected by the struggle with Solidarity? How did the internal debates and conflicts affect its actions with regard to Solidarity? For some time, the factions opposed to Solidarity were weakened in their ability to attack the union movement and forced to contend with its supporters within the party. They had to defeat the reformers inside the party who were allied with Solidarity before they could turn their full attention to defeating Solidarity (which they ultimately failed to do).

Method

The analysis presented here is based on in-depth interviews of 150 leaders, activists, and supporters of Solidarity; independent journalists; some people affiliated with the Church; some key leaders and supporters of the party/state; and members of the reform movement within Poland's Communist Party, especially in Kraków, one of the main centers of that movement. These interviews were carried out from 1986 to 1997 in several cities in Poland, and in the United States, Canada, and France with exiles. This article grew out of a larger study of Solidarity and the opposition to the Communist government in Poland (Bloom 2013, 2014).

In each city I visited, including Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Poznań, Katowice, and the mining region of Jastrzębie in Upper Silesia, I had connections who steered me to the leaders and who usually arranged my meetings with them. These interviews were not anonymous; many of these people were well-known and it matters who they were and what they said. Only in the few cases in which someone asked me not to identify him or her, I did as requested.

These interviews were conducted primarily in Polish, with a translator. My approach was to take life histories, searching for the relationship between biography and history. I based this approach on C. Wright Mills's insight that great historical events are reflected in and shape individuals' lives, and that therefore new light can be shed on those events by examining how they affected people and how those people responded to them. The particularities are unique, but individually they reflect—and collectively they constitute—the broad course of history. Therefore, what better way to understand historical events than to probe how they were manifested through people's

lives and their understanding of those lives, and conversely, how those lives and those understandings affected and shaped the events?

As I followed the individual lives of my subjects, I tailored the questions for each person. I began with the broadest formulation of a question, which allowed my subjects to give the question whatever interpretation she or he might wish and answer it in directions I might not have anticipated. Gradually, I sharpened and specified my questions in search of what I sought. An answer would often beget more questions as I followed paths that my respondents opened.

The Challenge of Solidarity

Faced with shipyard strikes that began in mid-August 1980 (which built on strikes earlier that summer), the Polish government broke all precedents and agreed to negotiate with workers in the northern port cities of Gdańsk and Szczecin and, later, in the industrial region centered around Katowice in the south. Within a week to ten days, the strikes spread from the ports to other cities and industries. One of the reasons it spread was that workers feared that if their counterparts in the ports were alone in striking, the 1970 killings might be repeated; they were determined that would not happen. For example, Seweryn Jaworski, who organized the strike in the Warsaw Steel Mill, told me: "We decided to strike because we feared a bloodbath. (After the strikes, I spoke with other people. In Silesia, they had the same feeling.) The army and the police could pacify some factories, but not the whole country."

Soon after the strikes spread from the port cities, the government capitulated and accepted an independent union with the right to strike. Before long, some ten million of the nation's thirty-five million citizens had joined the union: together with their families, they encompassed most of the nation, and they represented it in a far more meaningful way than the party ever had. They were, thus, challenging the frame the government had advanced since it came to power: that Poland was a "workers' state" and that the Polish United Workers Party legitimately represented the workers.

The new union soon aggressively challenged the ruling party's prerogatives, policies, and personnel in a number of areas. Members of the *nomenklatura*—the broad ruling elite—felt menaced by this movement that attacked on many fronts and had broad-based support—and rightly so (Sanford 1983). Distrust of the authorities was such that Admiral Janczyszyn, head of the navy, was forced to swear that the armed forces would not be used against the workers (Ash 1985), a promise that was ultimately belied. Given that it did not rule by consent, but by *raison d'etat* (read: Soviet tanks), what strategy could the party leadership have now? Both its ideology and its promise of prosperity had been discredited. These issues were wrenching the party apart. From the August strikes when workers first won the right to organize themselves independently, through the shock of martial law, about a million people quit the party—one-third of its membership. That lurch outward was heavily concentrated among workers and young people, a sign that the party was losing touch with its base and with the future. Thus, from the very beginning, the party/state was limited in its options.

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On August 24, one day after negotiations began in Gdańsk, thereby demonstrating the weakness of the party/state, divisions within the party surfaced over which direction to take. The centrists were led by Stanisław Kania, who became the new party leader, and who had been chosen, at least in part, to give the party a more liberal face because of the significant opposition that had appeared. Kania sought to carry out some of the accords that were reached during the negotiations and thereby regain social standing for the party. He faced strong opposition from many who felt that these agreements were contrary to their interests and who preferred a harder line. There was also a reformist wing that sought accommodation with Solidarity. These factions disagreed over whether, and how quickly, the agreements should be fulfilled, how much of the party officialdom should be purged and how to relate to Solidarity (Sanford 1983).

The Solidarity leadership was certainly aware of these intraparty divisions. Janusz Onyszkiewicz, who served as Solidarity's public spokesman, perceived them in this way:

> The reformers saw a chance to change the functioning of the whole political system. Another group, the majority, wanted to "domesticate" the Solidarity movement. They tried to use the British method of absorbing the leading figures into the establishment and giving favors such as cars, secretaries, offices. The third group felt that they had their backs to the wall, so: "We must sign anything, but later we will try to crush them."

Sanford (1983: 92–93) saw a breakdown of the party during the Sixth Party Plenum in October 1980 that was similar to Onyszkiewicz's. He reported that in a briefing to top security men in Silesia in early 1981, party leaders acknowledged that they had acquiesced to the workers' demands because they had no choice: "The aim was to quench the strikes, calm the nation and consider the situation later." Years after, in 1983, Jerzy Kołodziejski, the former governor of the Gdańsk province and one of the signatories of the Gdańsk Agreement of 1980, stated: "The authorities suffered from the conviction, based on past experience, that such agreements could be broken with impunity …" (Uncensored Poland News Bulletin 1981-92 [1983]: 4).

The latter factions hoped to ride this social movement until its force was spent. Zbigniew Regucki, as Kania's chief of staff, was the most highly placed official with ties to the reform movement:

> When Solidarity started questioning the party domains like the press, censorship, the party as the representative of the working class, it provoked two responses. One was fear; the other was to hope for the reaction of the Soviet Union: would they intervene or not? For the party apparatus members: Solidarity was a competitive power source to the party and would gradually assume all the powers that had hitherto belonged to the party.

Worse still, from the point of view of the *nomenklatura*—the broad ruling elite: Kania announced that party officials who had misused their offices to enrich

themselves would be investigated. Within just ten weeks after the Gdańsk and Szczecin accords were signed, one-third of the nation's district First Secretaries and prefects had been replaced, and people were demanding more (Ascherson 1982: 200). Charges of corruption played a role in the resignations of the First Secretaries in Wrocław, Tarnów, Koszalin, and Radom (Hahn 1987: 291n36). Some of their replacements were Solidarity members (ibid., 58–61).

So the threat that had originated *outside* now extended even *into the party*. The demand for change came from below. Regucki recalled that: "There were plenty of party activists, usually at the level of the provincial party committees, who really hoped that the system would become more democratic." These differences brought about contradictory policies as the different factions within the party vied with each other. For instance, the new chief of propaganda, the liberal Józef Klasa, permitted pro-Solidarity journalists a good deal of leeway in their reporting, while Stefan Olszowski, in charge of censorship, demanded that the media carry the party line (Kasprzyk interview).

Nonetheless, across the board, national, regional, and local party leaders tried various ways to push the union back. For about six months, the union often emerged from these efforts strengthened, with greater legitimacy, even as the party lost both in the outcomes and in its standing in society.

Large numbers of party members were so disillusioned that they just quit. By March, 1981, more than 200,000 had already abandoned their party membership (Ash 1985: 170). But for a long time, most remained, some out of inertia, some because they were not yet ready to give up on the party, while for some, like journalists, leaving the party also meant leaving their profession, which most were yet unwilling to do.

Many party members had joined Solidarity without concern for party policy. Witold Sułkowski, a Solidarity leader in Łódź, recalled that when faced with a conflict with the authorities, people who belonged both to the party and the union generally "were loyal to Solidarity and took the union's side" (Cave and Latynski 1982–3). A significant number stayed in the party specifically because they were asked to do so by Solidarity activists, who wished both to have inside information concerning the party's activities and influence on the party's direction. Stanisław Płatek, a miner activist, recalled: "I wanted to leave the party the moment I joined Solidarity. But Solidarity persuaded party members not to leave. They wanted to know what was going on in the party." From the point of view of the hard-liners, these members effectively constituted a disloyal fifth column that threatened their interests. As they saw it, Solidarity effectively had a presence within the party. That was the reverse of the usual situation, where the party had a presence in every organization. It obviously narrowed their choices.

One manifestation of the threat was that party reformers demanded free and open elections for party leadership positions, and purges of so-called *betons*—cement heads—meaning dogmatic hard-liners. Also, they fought to give Solidarity space. Maciek Szumowski, who edited the Kraków party newspaper during the period of legal Solidarity, told me: "We, the party opposition, wanted to give life to the Gdańsk agreement. We wanted the party to negotiate with Solidarity. The movement outside the party gave strength and protection to the dissidents within the party." Of course, this situation was the opposite of the way things normally operated. Szumowski continued:

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> The only safeguard for the reforms was the fact that Solidarity existed. We knew that without it, the party would not change much. So we fought to strengthen Solidarity, not to assume power within the party. We saw ourselves connected with Solidarity. That I could survive as chief editor of the Kraków party paper I owed to the support of Solidarity and the party grass roots, who heavily supported our paper. I had several visits from tough *apparatchiks* from the Warsaw Central Committee, who came to Kraków to fire me. But each time they learned what the reaction of the party masses in the larger factories in Kraków would be: they would strike. So, they couldn't fire me. It was a cold political calculation.

This situation forced Szumowski and his collaborators into open conflict with party conservatives: "We were charged with acting as agents of Solidarity in the party when we were expelled."

For a while, the party reform movement appeared to be a real contender for power. It assaulted the *nomenklatura* principle that people were chosen for their positions based on their loyalty rather than competence. There is no doubt that this is how the system functioned. George Schopflin contended about the Soviet Union that: *nomenklatura* was "the arrangement by which all significant appointments were made with the acquiescence of the party and relying on political criteria" (Schopflin 1990: 4–5). Len Karpinsky, who had been on the fast track for leadership in the Soviet Union until he became a dissident, told journalist David Remnick (1994: 171):

> Society during the Stalin era left open no real opportunities for self-realization or self-expression except within this perverted system of the Communist Party. The system destroyed all the other channels: the artist's canvas, the farmer's land. All that was left was the gigantic hierarchic system of the party, wide at the base and growing narrower as one climbed to the top. You had to have a party membership just for admission.

What was true for the Soviet Union also held for its empire in eastern Europe, including Poland, even though the regime was more liberal there than elsewhere. Stefan Bratkowski, the leader of the "renewed" Journalist Union and one of the best-known party reformers, asserted that Gierek had encouraged "thieves and embezzlers" and that the party was run as an oligarchy (Sanford 1983: 76).

This was a battle that the party leadership affirmed from the very beginning that it could not afford to lose: "We cannot give up the *nomenklatura* mechanism" (Staniszkis 1984: 217–18), they insisted. Some Solidarity leaders, including Zbigniew Bujak, who led the Warsaw region of Solidarity, were aware of these strains and saw the reformers as allies:

> We were looking for people from the other side to make an agreement. With the party First Secretaries from Gdańsk and Poznań [who openly expressed support for the reformers], an agreement was possible. The horizontal structures in the party [see following text] were certainly elements with which we could have discussions.

The Party Reform Movement

By fall, party reformers in Kraków were already organized into caucuses, and they were determined to make significant changes in party policies and personnel. Krzysztof Kasprzyk, the leader of the Polish Journalists Society in Kraków, and a leader in the party reform movement, said:

> Hard-liners talked all the time about democratic centralism. We felt that the party must evolve toward a more alive political structure. We discussed endlessly what should be done to prevent the full-time bureaucrats from dominating the party, like limiting *apparatchiks* to one or two terms.

Almost immediately, the reformers began to demand a new Party Congress as soon as possible (Kasprzyk interview); the conservatives sought to postpone it as long as possible, so that, said Szumowski: "the wave of support for Solidarity would abate and the balance would shift again in favor of the conservatives" (see also Sanford 1983: 144).

There were significant indications of the impact of Solidarity within the party. In Toruń, the "horizontal movement" began to formalize and provide a theoretical framework for local party organizations to meet and collaborate. This form of organization in a party that was organized vertically—so that the center communicated directly with the party bodies, but they did not communicate with each other—was normally tabooed. Organized factions opposed to the leadership were not permitted in the Soviet system. This movement, whose form was influenced by Solidarity's interfactory committees, spread by example and emerged independently by other names elsewhere (Ash 1985: 171). By December 1980, there were such linkages in 17 of the 49 provinces, centered especially in the big cities (Jerschina interview). Zbigniew Iwanow, the leader of this movement in Toruń, had led the strike that established Solidarity in the Towimor machinery plant there. After the strike, he won control of the local party organization, and he and his colleagues created an interfactory party commission. Within a few months, 7,000 out of the city's 17,000 party members were affiliated with the commission. Regucki recalled that:

> The horizontal structures were a threat to the centralist idea of the party. They were treated as an attempt to break the party from within, since they initiated a discussion regarding the party's prerogatives, and how the party apparatus should be elected.

The party apparatus quickly expelled Iwanow from the party, but the Towimor party members reelected him as First Secretary anyway, thereby showing open contempt for the party leadership. They then presented a list of demands, including free, secret, competitive elections, with at least two candidates at all levels; acceptance of the horizontal structures, with organized factions permitted; term limits and a ban on multiple office holding; and separation of the party from the government. One item,

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punishment of the "guilty in recent years," threatened the position of some quite powerful members of the *nomenklatura.* How could they respond to this rebellious attitude? For the moment, they had to take it.

The comrades in Toruń were not alone. In Łódź, the horizontal movement commission said that the party was "so compromised that transformation is not possible; it can neither regain the confidence of society nor renew itself" (Ascherson 1982: 201–2; Ash 1985: 98–99, 171–72; Persky 1981: 155–56). In the town of Kolbuszowa, the mayor was jailed, the First Secretary wanted to resign, and no one wished to replace them (Szumowski interview). In the Gdańsk Shipyard, rank and file members took control of the party organization, which then became openly hostile to the central leadership. Around the country, worker members complained about the party's lack of internal democracy (Ash 1985: 117, 170–71). It became increasingly difficult to keep internal debates secret. In several places, reformers had control of important city and provincial positions.

As the reform movement was growing, liberal party secretaries felt a need to cooperate with it. Some of them may have approved of its activity, but they had never tried and could never have succeeded in reforming the party without Solidarity. Tadeusz Fiszbach, the Party First Secretary in Gdańsk, sought a rapprochement with the strikers from the beginning. "We need a new party," he avowed, apparently genuinely moved by the determination to reconstruct the nation politically, economically and morally (Goodwyn 1991: 223; Persky 1981: 145). In Kraków, the First Secretary appointed a special commission to collect proposals for party reforms. It received hundreds of resolutions from all over Poland.

Szumowski said: "When the mass of words were put aside, the most important difference that emerged in the party was negotiations versus the use of force." When I responded that it was a difference drawn in blood, he said, "Yes, it was very dramatic. It was our opinion that it would be better to break up the existing structures from within than to attempt to set up structures outside the system. We tried to get control over party newspapers rather than to create a new political party." The reformers had few other realistic choices. Jan Jerschina, a sociology professor at Kraków's Jagiellonian University at the time and a leader in the reform movement, was one of those active in these discussions. He explained why:

> We discussed whether we should organize a new political party. But we would have lost half of our followers, who were not prepared to take such a drastic step, which would weaken the reformers who stayed in the party; and we ourselves would be very weak because it was too late to organize another party.

Journalists

The threat to the party leadership appeared in another form, among journalists who were the party's communication link to the population and who tended to support the reform movement, rather than the party line. So, there was intense conflict over what

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the regime called "propaganda." For example, when journalist Krzysztof Kasprzyk returned to Kraków from vacation on August 30, the eve of the signing of the accords, he immediately saw: "… lots of typical propaganda rhetoric, more and more pressure to publish things against the strikes, like commentaries of 'deep concern' about what might happen if the strikes went on. But we resisted."

Journalists did not join Solidarity; instead they did what the party called for: workers should take over their old unions and "renew" them. So reformers took over and restructured the Polish Journalists Society both nationally and in many local areas, and the press opened up considerably. Kraków journalists, said Kasprzyk, "called an extraordinary meeting to try to push a new character into the media, censorship, relations with the party, everything." So their "renewal" of the official trade union brought little comfort. The party later expelled Stefan Bratkowski, the national union leader who had originally been the party's candidate for that position (Kasprzyk interview). Many journalists felt that party policy had destroyed their standing and damaged their ability to do their jobs. They were determined to alter this situation. Kasprzyk said:

> The credibility of the media was extremely low. We wanted to end the "propaganda of success," control by the party *apparatchiks* and officials, censorship. Some 150 journalists from Kraków unanimously adopted a resolution which included: sympathy for the working class and welcome to the new trade unions; freedom of the press and an end to censorship; democratization; an Extraordinary Congress of the Polish Journalists Union. We demanded that the whole resolution be published the next day in the Kraków newspapers. It was revolutionary.

Soon, a petition was circulating nationally, calling for an extraordinary congress of the Polish Journalists Society. Kasprzyk: "Horizontal communication between media communities all over Poland began, mostly among younger journalists 28 to 40, who had previously had some trouble with censorship or the apparatus."

Solidarity's influence extended more deeply into the party, as its supporters engaged the leadership in open debate. The *apparatchiks* felt besieged by the internal, as well as the external, opposition. An example of how this battle played out is evident in the conflict over Maciek Szumowski's appointment as editor of the Kraków party paper, *Gazeta Krakowska*:

> When Solidarity appeared, the party suddenly had to find people who had popular trust to move to the front line. Suggesting me to be editor of *Gazeta Krakowska* was a calculated risk on Regucki's part. I took the job because of the pressure of colleagues and friends—I was not looking for a position in the hierarchy.

Szumowski saw a one-time chance in this offer, which was created by Solidarity's existence (see also Sanford 1983: 65):

> Solidarity created a chance to make a better press. I knew it was a big risk to accept this position: I would either have to negate all my journalistic achievements or

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> I would have a collision with the system—and I was aware that I would lose. I decided to publish a good paper and to defend my moral credibility up front. So, I had to assume my own defeat from the start.

Szumowski turned *Gazeta Krakowska* into an independent journal that quickly became an organ of the reformers. He brought the disagreements within the party into the open, thereby informing the public and enabling it to influence party policy, intensifying the intraparty conflict:

> *Gazeta Krakowska* presented the opinions of both the hard-liners and the moderates. We ran them on the front page. Such factional fighting in the socialist countries is usually played behind the scenes. The official press extracted all the elements which indicated the existence of factions within the party, while we took the full texts and printed them out. This party usually has a monopoly over the whole spectrum of political life; but then it had to make allowances for public opinion.

For example, Szumowski's exposés of environmental damage caused by the *Huta Skawina* aluminum factory forced the factory to close within a few months (Ash 1985: 138).

> *Gazeta Krakowska* came to be widely respected and sought after throughout Poland:We created something new in this system: a local party paper whose duty was not only to inform about the party but also about Solidarity and the current situation in the country. Isn't it strange? It was the official organ of the local Communist Party, but its new, open policy made it the unofficial, unnamed Solidarity organ. The reds had claimed that the socialist press represented the nation. Then it became true. The people who stood in long lines every morning to buy this paper claimed it as their very own.

(I spoke with people, some of whom were so impressed with the paper that they stored their copies and kept them for years. The paper developed a national circulation.)

Szumowski recalled that it soon became evident that he and his colleagues were regarded by party loyalists as enemies:

> *Gazeta Krakowska* followed a formula of dialogue and a search for compromise. And because the authorities more and more damaged this dialogue, our sympathy shifted more and more toward Solidarity. The hard-liners in the Politburo called us the official organ of Solidarity and of the Bishop of Kraków. We printed their opinion in the paper and answered it. So we openly debated the decision makers of Poland.

One reason for their feeling was Szumowski's insistence on bringing party business into the open, which limited the hard-liners' room to maneuver: "The workers supported the more moderate line and the message was telexed from factories to the

center. So for a while, hardly anyone spoke openly in favor of confrontation with Solidarity." Moreover, Szumowski openly defied the party leadership. When Stefan Bratkowski was expelled from the party, Szumowski publicly challenged the decision:

> I published an open letter defending Bratkowski, demanding that he and people like him be kept within the party. So I broke party discipline. Then, we published the local party committee's and others' responses. The party had to respond to the opinion of the editor of its own official organ, thus giving proof that they had lost control of the paper.

The *nomenklatura* was plainly frustrated with its inability to get at Solidarity, whose authority and stature rose as it responded to each challenge placed before it, while the morale of the party loyalists fell. The population was growing angry with the evident refusal of the government to fulfill the promises embodied in the accords the party had agreed to in negotiations. Meanwhile, the hard-liners increasingly demanded that rank and file party members carry the party line. Kasprzyk, as the leader of the Polish Journalists Society in Kraków, felt these pressures with especial intensity:

> We were in a very tough position, walking on a tightrope, because we tried to embody the values of Solidarity, but, we had to deal with the party. Ten of us were summoned to Stefan Olszowski's office at the Central Committee in Warsaw. It was an extraordinary meeting that lasted some four or five hours. We said that we didn't want to undermine the position of the party nor to remove the party as our political sponsor; we simply understood the role of the media in a different way than these bastards. We weren't trying to make people more radical; we simply didn't want to lie any more. But, Olszowski saw that as meaning that the media were escaping party control, as happened in Czechoslovakia in '68, so we realized that our position was very delicate.

George Sanford (1983: 58) reported that the party had a very hard line on this matter:

> Polish Communists had always stressed, in private conversation with me during the 1970s, that the main mistake in the Prague Spring had been their noisy mass media and that they would not allow this to happen in Poland.

Olszowski was in charge of the press office during the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968, so he would have felt this concern particularly acutely.

Counterattack

Party *apparatchiks* who felt their positions threatened pressured the leaders: as early as September 1980, lower-level party functionaries made known their anger about the concessions made to Solidarity (Hahn 1987: 64; Sanford 1983: 69). They sometimes took action against the union on their own. For example, the Party First Secretary

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in Czestochowa proclaimed a local state of emergency to prevent the registration of Solidarity (Sanford 1983: 108) while the former Warsaw First Secretary sought to organize the *apparatchiks* against Kania's policies (ibid., 110). By November 1980, just a few months after the accords were signed, the hard-liners were beginning to reassert themselves within the Central Committee. Andrzej Żabiński, a Politburo member, laid out a strategy to corrupt Solidarity leaders by according them privileges and status (ibid., 65, 67).

But, upheavals in January once again demonstrated the strength and determination of the Solidarity movement and strengthened the hand of the party reformers (ibid., 128). By early February, when Defense Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski ascended to the premiership, forces in favor of an early Party Congress were reaching a crescendo. Still, this significant change in personnel should have been seen as a warning. Kania had come to power because of the impact of the strikes, and he was obviously much closer to the reformers than Jaruzelski; the latter's assumption of power did not auger well for the reform movement.

The attack on Solidarity and its supporters continued. Solidarity activists were charged with using the union to destabilize the Polish society and economy. Politburo member Kazimierz Barcikowski told a meeting of party activists: "Don't be afraid to use polarizing methods!" (Staniszkis 1984: 73–74). Szumowski was a target. Because they dared not fire him, they tried to buy him off: "At a party, with much liquor flowing, they offered me a position in Rome. They said my wife could go, too, and also be a writer there, and that we would be paid in dollars.[3] I told them to fuck off." Then, they attempted to destroy him by going after his adolescent daughter:

> My daughter was in the worst period of immaturity. One evening, a security officer came and told me that she had been captured during an attempt to hijack a plane, armed with a hand grenade and a pistol. The plane had been surrounded by the antiterrorist military units. The girl and two boys were led out and a press conference was called on the spot. My daughter was interviewed on tape. They made it appear that the whole thing was because her parents were busy with the newspaper and paid her no attention. The tapes were then copied and hundreds of cassettes were sent to factories for people to hear.

But this scheme was undercut because of the strength of Solidarity:

> The criminal police found out that the grenade was made of wood. The young man who started the whole thing was an acquaintance of hers. He cooperated with the police because earlier he had, while drunk, stolen his father's car and had an

3. To appreciate the significance of this offer, it is necessary to understand that dollars were a coveted commodity in Communist Poland. On the black market (which was quite open), a dollar was worth a great deal. Many wages translated into less than $100.00 a month. In 1988, e.g., it cost about one dollar for a full meal (when the dollars were exchanged at the black market rate) at the best restaurants in the finest hotels. Everyone wanted them. It was a great benefit to be sent abroad so as to be able to earn dollars. Some Poles who spent their working lives in America would return to Poland after they retired. Their Social Security benefits permitted them to live quite well there.

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> accident. So the police had something on him. They forced him to improvise this game and to draw in Kasia. It turned out to be a primitive provocation on the part of the security office in Kraków.

Bydgoszcz

For the first six months after the August strikes, Solidarity was on the offensive, pushing back the party/state and defeating every effort to reverse its momentum. Throughout that period, the party made efforts to undermine Solidarity, all of which failed. But, in mid-March, events in the city of Bydgoszcz changed the dynamics in the struggle between Solidarity and the government, and deeply affected the internal workings of both Solidarity and the Communist Party. Briefly, Solidarity activists attended a meeting of the provincial council to support farmers who were seeking to form their own union, Rural Solidarity. Despite a previous agreement, they were not allowed to speak; when they refused to leave, they were savagely beaten by police who had been brought in from elsewhere, and they had to be hospitalized.

It had an enormous impact on all that followed. This was the first time since the August strikes that physical force had been used against Solidarity, and the union's leaders and activists saw it as a crucial test: if they did not respond appropriately, they would be preparing the way for more of the same. The event drove a wedge between the militants and the moderates within the union. Solidarity leaders agreed to demand punishment for those responsible for the attack and assurances that Rural Solidarity would have the right to organize. Solidarity's National Commission appointed a negotiating committee, with Wałęsa as its leader. It was supposed to report back and not to make any decisions on its own. As the negotiations proceeded, people prepared themselves, physically and psychologically, for a general strike in case an agreement could not be reached. While the government agreed in the negotiations to accept Rural Solidarity, it refused to punish the guilty parties.

With this agreement, Wałęsa then bypassed the National Commission and went on television to announce that the strike had been called off. His act created huge divisions within Solidarity that were very hard to overcome, as a significant faction felt that they should have struck and that Wałęsa, in making this announcement, had betrayed the trust that had been placed in him. The two sides saw the issue differently; militants felt it necessary to punish in order to prevent more of the same. As a leading activist, Alicja Matuszewska, put it, "Wałęsa said 'I could not make the country stand still because Rulewski [the Bydgoszcz leader of Solidarity and one of those beaten up] lost some teeth.' The issue wasn't Rulewski's teeth but the union's safety in the future." Moreover, they felt that Wałęsa had undermined the threat of a general strike, and that it would be much more difficult to threaten it again. But, as Wałęsa's supporters saw it, they had won on the main substantive issue, and to strike was to play with the threat of bloodshed. Wałęsa's action had considerable support among Solidarity activists.

There were also objections concerning the undemocratic decision making that Wałęsa had exhibited. Karol Modzelewski resigned his position as Solidarity's press

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spokesman, calling the agreement "a very bad compromise." He complained angrily about the undemocratic manner by which the matter had been handled (Persky and Flam 1982: 170): "The most important decision for both the union and Poland was made behind the union's back … . The mechanism of decision making is … monarchic …. There is a king and a court around him … and … he governs by himself …."

By the end, most people on both sides of that divide agreed that the outcome of this confrontation had shifted the momentum in favor of the government for the first time since the strikes that had created Solidarity. The event caused deep and lasting differences within Solidarity.

The Bydgoszcz events were also pivotal to the conflict within the party, whose own divisions now became deeper and more visible. Mieczysław Gil, who was a party member and a leader of Solidarity within the *Nowa Huta* Steel Mill, in a Kraków suburb, recalled: "Before Bydgoszcz, the party hadn't demanded that we declare ourselves either for the union or the party." Now, the party leadership demanded that its members leave Solidarity, and that they refuse to participate in the Solidarity warning strike on March 27 (Ash 1985: 157; Staniszkis 1984: 190). But, few heeded this appeal, noted Leszek Maleszka, an independent journalist:

> Lower-ranking party members supported Solidarity. The Tarnów Committee, one of the factories to which I was connected, said: "Until the matter is settled, we suspend our allegiance to the Central Committee." It was unheard of before for such a low-level body openly to declare its independence from the party leadership.

Tarnów's action was joined by many factory party organizations. Local First Secretaries and worker members on the Central Committee were among those who opposed the Politburo's orders (Ash 1985: 157–59; Goodwyn 1991: 296; Persky 1981: 212). At the March Party Plenum, Kania announced that he had 350 local party resolutions and angry calls for changes in the Politburo, with some insisting that the whole body resign and demanding a fuller explanation of the Bydgoszcz events (Hahn 1987: 96–104; Sanford 1983: 158).

In this turmoil, the reformers were finally able to force a mid-July date for the Extraordinary Party Congress, where, presumably, the contest for power within the party would be resolved (Hahn 1987: 33–39). Moreover, the reformers succeeded in winning democratic election rules: secret elections, with all candidates able to compete. The Horizontal Movement continued to grow. In a plenary session of the party, the hard-liners tried to change direction. But, noted Szumowski: "The workers in a mass supported the more moderate line and support for the moderates was telexed from factories to the center. The telexes were constantly running." This intervention was decisive: "The matter was decided within hours in a more peaceful way." So, several months after the strikes that had established the Solidarity union, the reformers were still able to defy and check the party leadership.

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Preparing for the Party Congress

> **Maciek Szumowski:** The party was the army through which Moscow controlled Poland. So, it was extremely important for Moscow to know that the party did not fall apart.

With the date for the congress set, the apparatus and its opposition struggled over a broad range of issues, including how delegates would be elected, what program the congress would adopt, what should be the relationship between the party and the government, and who would be elected to key positions. In many places, the party was becoming democratized from below.

> **Szumowski:** Normally, the party committee would go, say, to the Nowa Huta Steel Mill and suggest ten people as delegates and then read out the names. Then the audience could add a few more names. But, the Gdańsk and Kraków party committees proposed that every factory with over 1,000 party members should convene its workers and simply allow them to propose candidates. Knowing that if direct elections were held, people who supported Solidarity would be chosen, the Central Committee delayed accepting such a democratic procedure. But, the Gdańsk and Kraków committees elected representatives for the Party Congress, presenting the Central Committee with a *fait accompli*—also an exception in the system.

During this period, Szumowski contended, the reformers had considerable influence:

> For a few months, the totalitarian party had to reckon with pressure put on them by nonparty members. *Gazeta Krakowska* had considerable influence on the delegates coming from other factories: we could expose the hard-liners and thus contribute to their defeat, and promote those who were more liberal. We had decisive personal influence until the Party Congress.[4] So, the mechanisms of democratic regulation within the party were first, the pressure on the part of Solidarity; second, democracy within the party; third, this free press.

The party reformers maintained close ties with Solidarity and regularly consulted with Solidarity leaders.

The election campaign was intense. The atmosphere within the now openly factionalized party grew increasingly nasty. One example: in Toruń, Iwanow sought election as a delegate to the Party Congress despite his having been formally expelled from the party by the leadership. He won in the city party conference by a close vote of 363 to 354. More than half of the losers then threw down their party cards and walked out. First Secretary Najdowski, who was one of those who walked out, returned but vowed that with such a vote, he would not run for election. Later, Najdowski changed

4. Mieczysław Rakowski, the last party general secretary and the last Communist prime minister of Poland, denied to me that Szumowski held such influence.

his mind and requested that he and others be readmitted. The delegates refused and voted instead to strip Najdowski of his position as a deputy to the Sejm (parliament).

The party apparatus again tried to insist that divided loyalty was unacceptable. Dorota Terakowska, an independent journalist, recalled: "There was a call at the election meetings for an open declaration from those who were both party members and Solidarity members to declare themselves: either, or." But, Solidarity still carried great influence (Mason 1985: 148–49, 152–53), and officials often found that members of their own families, especially their children, were infected with the general condemnation of their activities. Adam Sucharski, then a colonel in the secret police, recalled that many of his workers "… were sympathizers of Solidarity. At the same time, we were having a hard time recruiting new people. In fact, we had situations where our own workers were trying to leave the service." So, the reform movement within the party appeared to be growing stronger.

As the Party Congress approached, the reformers were quite strong in some places, so strong in fact, that at the Kraków party regional conference in June they took control:

> **Szumowski:** We demanded that Catholics and nonparty people in general have equal access to higher government posts with party members. Rotation of posts in the party apparatus was also coded in the new statutes. The purpose was to end the control of the party apparatus.

They carried this program into the election for the new Party Congress, where, Szumowski recalled: "A fight went on, influenced both by *Gazeta Krakowska* and its audience, for every sentence, almost every word." The reformers' program included, he said: "… the acceptance of Solidarity as a social movement; the policy of seeking a consensus with Solidarity; and creating a new social covenant that would enshrine these policies."

By the time of the elections, the party leadership had accepted the reformers' demand for unlimited nominations from the floor (Mason 1985: 155). Newly adopted statutes stressed the power of elected party committees over the apparatus. Party leaders often had to consult with locals before making appointments, and now their proposals were often rejected. A new rule prohibited a candidate defeated in one party conference from trying to win election in another, and only 71 of 236 Central Committee members won election as delegates to the congress (Hahn 1987: 43–44, 47–51; Sanford 1983: 188), though most members of the Politburo and the Secretariat did manage to get reelected (Ash 1985: 172; Mason 1985: 151; Sanford 1983: 186–87, 189). Kania, who had difficulty winning a post, had to plead with the conferences to elect people known and trusted by Moscow (Ash 1985: 177–78). Some conservatives were outraged by this demeaning spectacle (*Nowe Drogi* 1981: 7: 119, cited in Hahn 1987: 77).

In April, 322 Basic Party Organizations in Bydgoszcz replaced their First Secretaries; only 71 incumbents managed to retain their positions (Ash 1985: 172). Just some 17 percent of the incumbent provincial Party Secretaries managed to get reelected. In twelve provinces, all the Secretaries were replaced and in another

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thirteen, all but one (Hahn 1987: 69). New people now composed 80 percent of the regional party organizations, 65 percent of the village, town, and factory organizations, and 50 percent of the First Secretaries of all the Basic Party Organizations (Mason 1985: 130). Ninety percent of the delegates to the Party Congress were new, a fact that provided hope to the reformers and made the party leaders fearful. Szumowski said:

> The Soviet Union and the security forces in Poland were afraid of one thing: that the political ambitions of Solidarity would join forces with the political ambitions of the reformist elements within the party. If such a thing happened, there would be no pretext to intervene militarily because the party would still be officially in control and supported by a mass movement.

So, the reformers were feeling powerful. But, by the end of May, with most of the delegates already chosen, it was becoming evident to those who watched carefully that despite the large number of new people elected to the Party Congress, many of them wanting significant changes, the reformers would not dominate.

In early June, the Soviets sent an angry letter to the Polish party that warned of an "attempt to deal a decisive defeat to the Marxist-Leninist forces of the party and produce its liquidation" (Hahn 1987: 116). Only days later, at the eleventh party plenum, Kania's conservative opponents attempted to depose him. He survived, thanks largely to the support he received from military officers, who constituted 10 percent of the Central Committee (Ash 1985: 175–77). Zbigniew Regucki said: "Moscow wanted all the liberals removed from power. The Soviet letter was widely circulated, and this was the atmosphere in which the preparation for the Party Congress took place." In the elections, both reformers and the most conservative candidates frequently failed to be elected as delegates, because neither could get a majority of votes, so the new delegates often had no connection to the reformers. Many of them were similar in outlook to those they replaced (Sanford 1983: 203).

While the reformers' strength was in the industrial centers, where Solidarity was the strongest, almost half the population still lived in small towns and villages of 10,000 or less (*Rocznik Statistyczny* 1990: 46, table 15, and 47, table 16). Here, invisible to outsiders, is where the hidden strength of the apparatus was most strongly felt. Jan Jerschina:

> The party apparatus won the elections because it was able to direct the provincial areas against the great cities. We didn't control who was sent from the provincial areas to the regional congresses. And during the Party Congress, the so-called green provinces opted unanimously against the industrial provinces. Among the 2,000 at the Party Congress, there were about 700 who represented reformist attitudes similar to ours.

Warsaw and Upper Silesia were also strong supporters of the party leadership (Szczypiorski 1982: 136, and interview with Szumowski).

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The atmosphere was one of increasing polarization. At the summer Sejm session, Premier Jaruzelski spoke of the need for more discipline and respect for law and order. He vowed that antisocialist and anti-Soviet activities would be punished. The deputies passed a resolution calling for firm action against Solidarity "extremism" that, they said, was pushing the country to a "national tragedy" (Sanford 1983: 201).

These constant threats from the party alienated Solidarity activists, including those who were still party members. Disgust with the party led many of them to lose interest in the intraparty struggle, especially after Bydgoszcz, and they voted with their feet and left (Jerschina interview). Many worker members refused to seek election as delegates to the Party Congress because they would be isolated among their fellow workers if they did so (Ash 1985: 173). Few outside the party realized that the reform movement within the party was losing strength.

The party reformers felt the support of Solidarity, which had sustained them and made their efforts to change the party possible, ebbing away, making victory more elusive. Szumowski said: "Solidarity lost interest in what was going on within the party. The tragedy of the party reformers was that Solidarity was occupied with itself: they became more and more convinced that they alone could do something" (see also Goodwyn 1991: 292–93). Kasprzyk recalled that:

> Solidarity treated the party as one big structure that obstructed the whole reform movement. But I thought from the beginning that the only chance for the whole thing to succeed lay within the system, that this system could not be reformed from the outside.

This polarization weakened the reform movement, as those who left the party were that movement's supporters. Jan Jerschina recalled that after the Bydgoszcz events: "There were fewer and fewer in the middle, and fewer chances to get more followers from this middle." By ignoring the party reformers, Solidarity was unknowingly strengthening the hand of the hard-liners who would soon enough turn their full attention to the union. Virtually none of the Solidarity activists with whom I spoke was aware of the effect their turning away from the party struggle had.

Party Congress

At the start of the congress, the reformers still appeared strong. Professor Hieronim Kubiak, a liberal sociology professor from Kraków's Jagiellonian University, was elected chair of the program committee, which could be a powerful position, as he set the timing of discussions. Kubiak told me: "All documents went through my hands and without my acceptance, they couldn't reach the congress." During the congress, Szumowski wrote a column for *Gazeta Krakowska* that he entitled "Behind Closed Doors." Each day, he summarized the events, including reporting on closed meetings from which, as a delegate, he could not be excluded (Hahn 1987: 132–33). From his

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point of view, the Extraordinary Congress was a failure, despite whatever strengths the reformers had:

> The reformers made no progress at all. *Gazeta Krakowska* and I were attacked. There was even a proposal to throw me out of the congress because I was no longer "really in the party." In the back of everyone's mind was Moscow. The reformers were afraid of the shadow of the shadow of radicalism falling on them. They were conscious that Moscow was watching the congress and every verb, every adjective was very, very closely monitored. So, the reformers stepped back in their rhetoric. They all spoke not so much in real terms, but in "newspeak." So, only those who really understood the nuances knew what people were for.

In this atmosphere, Szumowski noted that many elected as reformers backed away from the reform camp:

> It was very fluid because there were "opportunistic reformers" who had thought that what they read in *Gazeta Krakowska* was the course that the party was going to take. They did not realize that to a great extent, what was happening in *Gazeta Krakowska* was my personal doing and it was actually rejected by the party. But, when they looked around and listened to Prime Minister and Minister of Defense General Wojciech Jaruzelski and others, they realized that they were swimming upstream, so they changed course and suddenly stopped being reformers.

In the elections, the reformers were outmaneuvered by the party leaders, who allowed them to take over the job of preparing the resolutions to be voted on while the leadership concentrated on retaining control of the party apparatus. The outcome, Jerschina recalled,

> … was a very beautiful document with everything there: self-management, restructuring of industry, changes in party statutes, free party elections, democratization of the state. But, Mr. Olszowski was very happy that we were doing this. He was wise enough to know that in a short congress, if the reformers prepared the resolutions, they would not have time to participate in the plenary sessions. Two thousand people voted on the document, with no time to read it and not much time to discuss it. The main thing in the party is to elect a leadership. Paper, conclusions, documents—who cares about all this? If you have power, you do with documents what you wish.

Although Kania was easily reelected to his position as First Secretary (Ash 1985: 178–79), he was weakened by attacks upon his policies and his character. Most incumbents were turned out of office: only 8 percent of the old Central Committee was reelected (Mason 1985: 157). But, recalled Regucki: "Both the radical wing and the conservative wing in the party were cut down in the election process. What was left was the middle, which could be easily manipulated."

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> **Janusz Onyszkiewicz:** At the Party Congress, the party apparatus was more or less wiped out of the Central Committee. The people who replaced them were newcomers who didn't know the rules of the game. They were completely atomized and they didn't know their way around. So the remaining representatives of the old guard could keep control. The Central Committee had 100 people, of whom 20 to 30 were from the former committee. And you had 70 who didn't know each other, and who knew nothing about how the whole thing functioned. So, they were easily handled. As a result, while it looked very much like a defeat of the party apparatus, in fact, it was not because the *apparatchiks* retained the ability to manipulate. The party became even more centralized because of that.

The Politburo, a smaller body that comprised the actual leadership, was much less changed than the Central Committee (Ash 1985: 179). And in some cases, the new people did not last long. Journalist Andrzej Wróblewski recalled that:

> The party leader in the Gdańsk shipyard was promoted to the Politburo as a desperate attempt to present the party as younger, more democratic. In a few months, he was dropped because he was too close to the workers and too far from the party hierarchy.

When all was said and done, the party leaders had succeeded (Ash 1985: 236). They still controlled the party. Moreover, after the Extraordinary Party Congress, the horizontal movement began to dissipate (Kolankiewicz 1981: 372). So, despite the huge challenge presented by Solidarity supporters, in the end the old guard continued to retain power. Now it became possible to go after the reformers within the party and those outside as well. As Poland's last Communist prime minister and general secretary of the party Mieczysław Rakowski put it to me: "In the early months of '81, we were very weak because the party was divided in many different ways. Therefore, at this time, we couldn't adopt a strong policy towards Solidarity." Now, of course, that situation had changed.

Consolidation after the Party Congress

With the challenge to its authority gone, and the faction fight effectively over after nearly a year of protracted conflict, the leadership now turned to its adversaries, both within and outside of the party. Jaruzelski warned at the Central Committee meeting following the Party Congress that the time for concessions had passed, and that the party would defend its power against Solidarity (Ash 1985: 197; Sanford 1983: 217). But first, what remained of the internal party opposition had to be dealt with. Party reformers, journalist Andrzej Wróblewski recalled, were now characterized as: "naive and threatening possible normalization. People were reminded that the Warsaw Pact would not tolerate that the largest country [in the Soviet bloc] besides Russia fall into anarchy." A number of the most prominent reformers were now expelled. Hieronim Kubiak, who had been placed on the Politburo as a gesture to the reformers, illustrated

how the attack against the reformers proceeded, with propaganda, threats, and overt eavesdropping:

> In a booklet entitled, "Who Really Is Hieronim Kubiak?" a so-called biography, there is information about Americans whom I really met, openly and professionally. So, adding fiction to reality, and mixing it together, they produced a kind of cocktail which was quite explosive. And remember what it meant to be accused of working with the CIA.

Kubiak received threatening letters and found his activities increasingly circumscribed:

> They would send a postcard that spoke of the punishment we would get for what we "did to Poland." There was supposedly a capital sentence issued for me at least twice, with a statement when it would be fulfilled, under what circumstances, and that no one would be able to prevent it. On another occasion, I was told that my four-year-old son was not necessarily safe. I had to be in Warsaw away from my family for a week, two, without any direct contact with them, so how critical it was psychologically! And step-by-step, the pressure grew, with the intention to force us to resign. For example, I had a conversation in my university office, late in the afternoon. No one else was present. It ended and I left immediately. The next morning, I got a phone call at my hotel in Warsaw that Jaruzelski wanted to see me as soon as possible. I learned from him, to my astonishment, that I shouldn't speak any longer with that man. He repeated fragments of our conversation.

Kubiak found himself increasingly isolated on the Central Committee, as more and more of the reformers were eliminated from the body.

By this time, the reform movement within the party had been contained, so conservatives were free to carry on an offensive against Solidarity. In mid-August 1981, pressured by the Soviets, Kania and Jaruzelski accepted their view that Solidarity was an enemy. They promised a "full-blooded struggle" against "anarchy, counter-revolution and anti-Sovietism." News of the meeting and its conclusions was published in *Trybuna Ludu* (Sanford 1983: 225), the national party paper, still controlled by the apparatus. The assault on Solidarity and its activists now grew more open and more virulent, as they were branded as "extremists" and publicly blamed for all social problems in an effort to sap the union's support. Ryszard Sawicki, a Solidarity leader of the copper miners and a member of the Solidarity National Commission, said: "I remember [Mieczysław] Rakowski [then the vice-prime minister, later prime minister] from the summer, and his harsh speeches against Solidarity. He broke off negotiations. Before, they had kept the veneer of diplomacy, but after the Party Congress, they were abrupt and nasty." And now Solidarity confronted the political equivalent of a full-court press, as goods, including food, became increasingly short in stores and strikes were allowed to proceed without attempts to settle them, while an all-out propaganda campaign was waged against the union movement. Solidarity was accused of being

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responsible for the lack of goods because of its propensity to strike. Zbigniew Bogacz described the atmosphere in those days:

> It was like being hunted: the hunters make noise so the animals are driven forward. Now, Solidarity is the animal being chased. People are terrorized by stories of the coming winter: that there will be no coal, no warm water, no electricity—because of Solidarity. And what do we have? One national publication and a few regional presses. If all you see on television is that Solidarity is guilty, it is understandable that some people began to believe it. In the last week, we got information about the movement of Polish and Russian troops, of military convoys moving at night. I traveled from Katowice to Pszczyna to get to Brzeszcze, and I could see convoys of military troops moving.

By then, it is evident, the conservatives no longer felt constrained by the support that Solidarity had within the party; that problem had been overcome and they were now free to act. At the Fourth Party Plenum, in mid-October, Kania's resignation as party First Secretary was accepted and Jaruzelski added that designation to his titles. This was another in a series of clear indications, for anyone paying attention, that reaction was beginning. Once again, party members were warned to leave Solidarity (Sanford 1983: 226).

Conclusion

These developments were all steps toward what became the declaration of martial law and the attempt to crush Solidarity in December 1981. The party and the *nomenklatura* had been forced to come to terms with the union because of the insistence of the Polish working class, together with the support that Solidarity had generated within the party. The reform movement within the party saw itself as connected to and dependent upon Solidarity; it could not have existed without Solidarity. This pro-Solidarity movement prevented the government from acting against the union for a lengthy period of time, allowing Solidarity's ideology, methods, and goals time to percolate deeply into the population and to win greater support, thereby further limiting the government's options.

Once martial law was declared, the party leadership expelled the leaders of the reform movement, thereby publicly asserting that the constraints under which they had operated no longer applied. Many others subsequently followed those who had been expelled from the party voluntarily, especially workers and youth. The net loss was enormous: according to one source, during the period of legal Solidarity, from the beginning of September until the imposition of martial law, the party lost a million members—one-third of its entire membership (Paczkowski 2006). Another source found that after martial law: "In Gdańsk alone, the party ranks went down by about 35 thousand people, which meant one third. On the national scale around a million members left or were forced to quit" (Wąs 2011).

After that, few others joined the party, so it became increasingly a gerontocracy, as its median age increased year after year. One researcher who concentrated on the party in the Gdańsk region found that by 1984, although there were 25,000 students in the whole Gdańsk province, only 62 of them were party members. At the same time, in the Radom province, the party lost about 30 percent of its members. In all cases, the losses were concentrated among younger people. In Radom they were heavily concentrated among those aged 30 to 49, who were the most active and significant section of the party, described as the "trunk of the party" (ibid.). As a result, the median age of party members was said to have increased significantly; most of those who were left were older, many of them retirees. In Gdańsk, the party was increasingly composed of retirees and pension recipients, who made up 20 percent of its ranks. Members discussed the problem of the aging of retirees, but found no way to overcome it (ibid.).

During the whole period when the government recognized Solidarity as legal, with the exception of the events in Bydgoszcz, no significant repressive tactics had been used against the union until martial law was declared. This was so despite the fact that in the past the Polish government, like the rest of the Soviet empire, had been willing to use deadly force and other aggressive police tactics. In fact, the use of deadly force in 1970 constrained the Gierek administration from repeating it, as did the vast social support that Solidarity had. Thus, Poland did not, for example, use police repression much in 1980 and 1981, as was done in Italy in the 1960s, where protestors sometimes used violent tactics, and terrorism became endemic for a period (Della Porta 1996: 66–71). Both of these kinds of activities were eschewed by Solidarity in public statements, and by example on the part of its leaders and activists, and by the Church, which held significant influence in Solidarity, and in the broader society. Thus, for a long time, it was difficult for the authorities to justify repression.

Nonetheless, a survey carried out not long before martial law was declared found that managers who were party members were not particularly concerned with public sentiment: they were ready to restrict freedom of speech; ban strikes or use the army to break them; require farmers to sell their produce, presumably at prices fixed by the government; suspend free-from-work Saturdays, which Solidarity had won; strengthen both the criminal and the secret police; and ban demonstrations, with harsh sentences for demonstrators (Powiorski 1981: 114). By late November, the Central Committee was moving in that direction, as it called for giving the government emergency powers (Lopinski et al. 1990: 15n1). The United States soon had satellite photos of military vehicles, of personnel carriers and tanks gathered not far from the Gdańsk Shipyard, and of Warsaw Pact troops approaching the Polish border (Bernstein and Politi 1996).

So, eventually, after having resolved the factional dispute within the ruling party, the government was able to get to where it wished (with Kania and his team removed from their positions of leadership). However, despite all the pressure it exerted, and despite martial law, the detention of 10,000 activists overnight, and the outlawing of the union, public support for Solidarity could not ultimately be crushed. The whole

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thing was another devastating demonstration of how isolated the party had become. Jaruzelski acknowledged that the imposition of martial law demonstrated the party's isolation: "it is a monstrous, macabre discredit for the party that after 36 years of ruling, it has to be defended by force" (Wąs 2011). Both because of the intensity of commitment of many of its leading activists, and because of the vast social support it enjoyed, the union movement survived for years underground until the regime was forced once again to negotiate, this time for semifree elections that ended Communist rule.

Had the party been monolithic, it would much sooner and more easily have been able to oppose and possibly cripple the movement that produced Solidarity. But, the Solidarity social upheaval had a far-reaching impact: the new union was enthusiastically embraced by almost the whole of the society. The ruling party, containing 1 of every 12 people in the country, could not escape its influence. There were many within the party who eagerly took up Solidarity's demands for change, now feeling that at last they had social support for the changes they had long wished. Others could not escape the influence of friends, relatives, children who insisted that they support Solidarity and berated them when they did not: oppositionists were unavoidably a part of their families. They had to endure holidays, birthdays, name days, and other occasions together. When they did, talk did not always avoid the sensitive topics that Solidarity raised. So Solidarity's influence inescapably made its way into the party's deliberations.

It is difficult to see how, given Solidarity's vast social support, the ultimate defeat of the Communist regime could have been avoided without the use of massive repression. For a lengthy period, the party leaders were inundated by the flood of Solidarity-influenced policies and members; it was not easy for them to turn things around, and ultimately they could not do so. By the end of the decade, after repression had been tried and had failed to tamp down demands for change, they had to come to terms with Solidarity's demands, and Communist and Soviet domination of Poland came to an end, followed shortly by the rest of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. So, it is evident that the popular movement that Solidarity represented and furthered deeply affected the government's options as it sought to deal with a challenge more powerful and sustained than confronted by any other state in the Soviet empire. This was especially so because by the end, leaders of the Soviet Union refused for many reasons to use force to crush the opposition as it had done earlier in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia.

Heretofore, political opportunity structure has been considered with respect mainly to the possibilities for action available to social movements. In this situation, the role of the state had been seen as particularly important in terms of the options made available to movements. But, we should also be aware that governments may be faced with the same considerations as social movements; they too can by stymied and constrained in their choices of action. In studies of social movements, analysts should be aware of the interpenetrating character of the interaction between social movements and the state in circumstances where the social movement has a significant social impact. The

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state may be affected by the new realities created by social movements to which the state must respond. These circumstances make the analysis more complex, but more in tune with reality.

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